

GETTING THE INTERVIEW

❖ The Screening Process—Making the Cut

The purpose of a résumé is to allow potential employers the opportunity to find out as much as possible in a few minutes, maybe even seconds, to determine if they would like to meet you in person. This determination will often be made on the basis of one or two sheets of paper—the résumé, cover letter, and perhaps an application that you have submitted to an employer via mail, fax, e-mail, or the Internet.

Please look at the job announcement for a medical assistant that appears below this paragraph, then examine the résumé appearing on the next (opposite) page. Review the résumé as though the applicant was a friend of yours who had given it to you, along with the job announcement, to get your opinion as to whether the résumé is suitable for this position. Also, you might imagine yourself as an employer trying to determine whether the résumé interests you enough to call the applicant for an interview. *After reviewing the résumé carefully, as part of Exercise 1.1, answer the 14 questions that follow the job announcement.* After you have completed this exercise, your instructor will provide you with information about any and all errors or suggestions regarding the formatting and content of this résumé.

MEDICAL ASSISTANT

Front office position in busy office with 3 M.D.s. Skills required: greeting patients, scheduling, multi-line telephone system, MS Office Suite, email/Internet, filing and office procedures, type 40 WPM, and familiarity with Medical Manager. Salary dependent on training, experience, and skills. Full benefits. Fax résumé to 330-847-9210 or email: Sherrie@medicalgroup.com.

1. How does the résumé look? Is it approximately centered? Can it be read easily?
2. Is the spacing consistent throughout? Is the font size consistent? Are the sections/headings lined up and consistent?
3. What suggestions would you make for layout changes?

REVIEW OF RÉSUMÉ

BARBARA S. PETERSON

3670 East Burns, Canton, OH 44720
(330) 494-6170

Medical Office Job Desired

Education:

Certificate of Completion - Medical Assistant Program

Stark State College of Technology, Canton, OH 2006

Certified Nursing Assistant Program, Peabody Polytechnic High School, Amarillo, TX 2004

Internship - Nursing Assistant, Sierra View Convalescent, Amarillo, TX 2004

SKILLS/ABILITIES:

- Able to take patient histories and vital signs; give injections; and perform intake charting, E.K.G.s, suture removal, throat cultures, specimen collection/handling, and transfer of non-ambulatory patients.
- Experienced in completing tax forms and communicating discrepancies to taxpayers.
- Current CPR and First Aid certifications.
- Language skills include ability to read, write, and speak Hungarian.
- Email and Internet experience very limited.
- Experience preparing CRF and source documentation utilized in billing insurance; copying, filing, and transferring medical records; and preparing patient charts.
- Skilled in medical terminology with Mestamed and Medical Manager Software.
- Computer proficient in MS Word and Excel.
- Received first place award for Needlepoint from Amarillo home and garden club.
- Multi-line phone experience screening patient calls and scheduling appointments.
- Possess excellent patient relations skills: friendly, patient, and aggressive.

Experience:

Clerk (part-time)

Internal Revenue Service, Amarillo, TX 2002-2004

Medical Assistant, Peachwood Medical Group, Amarillo, TX 2004-2006

Medical Supply Specialist, United States Army Reserve

Combat Support Hospital Unit, Amarilo, TX 2002-2006

- *Training:* Quartermaster School, Medical Supply Special, Fort Lee, Virginia

4. Are there grammar, style, and organization errors in the résumé?
5. What stands out in the résumé? Are the items or sections that stand out important in view of what is requested in the job announcement?
6. Is all the contact information (name, address, phone, and so on) that an employer would desire contained in the résumé?
7. Are any words or terms misspelled? Is this important? Why?
8. Is there information contained in the résumé that should be omitted because it is not relevant to the position being sought?
9. What are the applicant's strongest qualifications? What qualifications requested in the advertisement are missing? Is it OK to omit desired skills if you don't have them?
10. How old is the applicant? Should this be included in a résumé?
11. Should a cover letter also be written to accompany the résumé?
12. Nothing is said about references; should references be part of the résumé?
13. Are there any time gaps in employment or school history? Employers look at this very carefully. Do you know why?
14. If you were an employer, what information on the résumé would you verify? Why? Did you know that studies indicate between 40 to 50% of all résumés have some information that is inaccurate?

AN EMPLOYER'S PERSPECTIVE ON RÉSUMÉS

Employers will review résumés of applicants with the goal of eliminating those who present themselves poorly or do not possess the required skills. This is similar to what we do when we first meet new friends or acquaintances. We look at them, their clothes, posture, smile, laugh, eyes, and so on, and then decide whether we would like to get to know them better. Our evaluation of them is based upon whether the qualities they possess are similar to those that we value. In other words, if the first time we see someone we note that he has a pleasant smile, laughs easily, and likes spending time outdoors, we might want to get to know him better—especially if we like people who are positive, have a good sense of humor, and enjoy hiking.

Employers do the same thing. They look for *qualities you have that are valued in their businesses*. The characteristics they value are usually a positive attitude, related work experience, formal education, and training in areas where they have a specific need, such as word processing, filing, greeting customers, answering the telephone, and conducting research on the Internet. If they see that you have these skills, they will probably want to interview you to see if you are someone they want to consider for possible employment in their company.

❖ Appearance is Critical

But be aware that it is not just the skills listed on your résumé that are important. It is much more than the words you place on the résumé page or cover letter that are important. The *appearance* of the résumé page and cover letter is critical.

Like the fascinating person across the room at a party; *initially it's her image or appearance* that makes her seem interesting. The qualities that attract you to another individual are sometimes definable and sometimes not. However, in a résumé we can usually identify the characteristics that make the résumé appealing to the reader.

Initially your résumé's appearance will have the greatest impact on the reader/employer. The paper that you choose (quality and color), the placement on the paper (whether it's centered), the typeface and size, spelling and punctuation, headings, length of previous jobs, and communication skills (choice of words and use of key words—words or technical language that indicate you are trained/knowledgeable in your field will all be reviewed by the reader). Most employers will look for an error or something missing in your background to screen out candidates who do not possess the qualities they seek. After the initial impression and upon reading the cover letter, résumé, and application (and this will only occur if the reader likes what she has initially seen), the reader will begin to look at the organization of your material, your skills, experience, and education. And in the case of the cover letter, she will also look at the tone of your letter—meaning its attitude and whether it is positive and reasonably well written. From that first impression an employer will decide whether he wants to get to know you better—have a first meeting with you—an interview.

❖ What You Must do in Preparing a Résumé

Because a professional appearance is critical, it is appropriate to do the following:

1. Prepare your résumé on a computer using a laser or quality inkjet printer (the printed typeface should be clean and precise, not fuzzy). It is suggested that you use a word processing program such as Microsoft Word or Corel WordPerfect so that your résumé can be modified and/or updated easily. Often you will want to modify the résumé when applying for a specific position, perhaps to include the exact title of the position and the company name. Also you may think of some project or skill that you possess but initially omitted in the first draft of the resume. Therefore, it is essential to have your résumé stored on disk for later modification.
2. The body of the text on the page should appear centered—both vertically and horizontally. It doesn't have to be measured precisely, but simply look centered when viewed by the naked eye.
3. Use the spell-check feature of the word processing program. Remember, every technical or business product name (like Intel or Linksys), plus the names of individuals, should be double-checked for accuracy as the spell-check feature of most software programs may not recognize these types of misspellings.
4. Have a friend, maybe two, who has a formal education and/or a college degree proofread your résumé.

5. Complete the résumé several days before you need it. Doing it at midnight the day before you have an 8 a.m. interview often results in shoddy work.
6. The paper used for a résumé should be white, light gray, or ivory; 24-pound classic laid or linen paper.

❖ Résumé Examples

To illustrate how important appearance is, look at Figures 1.1 and 1.2 on the following pages. Both figures have identical written text (are the same résumé); however, the formatting (appearance) of Figure 1.1 is very professional in appearance, while Figure 1.2 is unacceptable because of improper spacing, centering, and layout—not because of content or typographical errors. Remember: *The presentation of your written material is as important as what you write about yourself.* The résumé represents you at your best; therefore, look your best.

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Figure 1.1 Professional Appearance

Rafael E. Cortez
 5559 E. Spruce Ave.
 Clovis, CA 93611
 (559) 845-9621
 rec559@aol.com

OBJECTIVE **Administrative Assistant—Orange School District**

QUALIFICATIONS

- Associate Degree and Certificate of Completion in Business Office Occupations.
- Three years' experience in retail customer service and internship in high school administrative office.
- Excellent word processing skills (examples available); MS Office Suite including Outlook.
- Bilingual—read, write, and speak fluent Spanish.
- Chosen as leader of college business club.
- Office skills include: 10-key by touch, type 48 WPM, and work well with peers on team projects.
- Industrious and dependable—missed only one school day in the last year.
- Quick learner—able to grasp instructions accurately and complete tasks as requested in a timely manner.

EDUCATION **Associate Degree, Business Office Occupations—Administrative Assistant Emphasis**
Certificate granted, Administrative Assistant program
 Fresno City College, Fresno, CA, 2006
 Completed program with a 3.4 GPA
 Officer, Phi Beta Lambda Student Business Organization

EMPLOYMENT

<p><i>Internship</i> Washington Union High School, Easton, CA</p> <p>Completed 5-month internship in active administrative office.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepared correspondence and newsletter using MS Word. • Assisted in data entry, scheduling appointments, and routing phone messages on multi-line telephone system. • Translated for Spanish-speaking parents. • Performed filing tasks—alphabetical and numerical. 	<p>Spring, 2006</p>
<p><i>Customer Service/Sales Associate (part-time)</i> Bargain Mart, Fresno, CA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist customers with merchandise and ring up sales. • Stock shelves and price merchandise. • Received three salary increases while employed at this busy store. • Offered full-time position upon completing degree. 	<p>2005–Present</p>

Figure 1.2 Poor Appearance

Rafael E. Cortez

5559 E. Spruce Ave.
Clovis, CA 93611
(559) 845-9621
rec559@aol.com

OBJECTIVE: Administrative Assistant—Orange School District

QUALIFICATIONS

- Associate Degree and Certificate of Completion in Business Office Occupations.
- Three years' experience in retail customer service and internship in high school administrative office.
- Excellent word processing skills (examples available); MS Office Suite including Outlook.
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- Industrious and dependable—missed only one school day in the last year.
- Quick learner—able to grasp instructions accurately and complete tasks as requested in a timely manner.

EDUCATION

Associate Degree, Business Office Occupations—Administrative Assistant Emphasis

Certificate granted, Administrative Assistant Program

Fresno City College, Fresno, CA, 2006

Completed program with a 3.4 GPA

Officer, Phi Beta Lambda, Student Business Organization

EMPLOYMENT

Internship, Spring, 2006

Washington Union High School, Fallon, CA

- Completed 5-month internship in active administrative office.
- Prepared correspondence and newsletter using MS Word.
- Assisted with data entry, scheduling appointments, and routing phone messages on multi-line telephone system.
- Translated for Spanish-speaking parents.
- Performed filing tasks—alphabetical and numerical.

Customer Service/Sales Associate (part-time), 2005-Present

Bargain Mart, Fresno, CA

- Assist customers with merchandise and ring up sales.
- Stock shelves and price merchandise.
- Received three salary increases while employed at this busy store.
- Offered full-time position upon completing degree.

NETWORKING—THE HIDDEN JOB MARKET

❖ What is Networking?

Networking is using relationships, formal and informal, to get inside firms and meet hiring managers you would normally not have access to if you did not have a referral from a friend or acquaintance. When you are seeking employment, “name-dropping” will provide you entrance to firms, and access to people within those firms you never dreamed that you would have the opportunity to meet. The ultimate payoff in networking comes when a network source says to you: “Call Tom Branigan at Allied Industries and tell him that I referred you.”

A young friend of ours, Gloria, recently related the following story about her first job in the vocation of her choice, law. She was attending Cerritos Community College and working at an upscale restaurant on weekends to provide financial support. While serving a well-dressed businessman who was dining alone, Gloria made small talk about the Los Angeles Lakers basketball team and then casually asked what the restaurant guest did. He responded that he was an attorney with a practice in a nearby community. My young friend replied by saying that she was a second-year attorney assistant major at Cerritos College. Before the attorney left the restaurant, he gave Gloria his card and stated that if she was interested in part-time employment while attending school, to give him a call and he would set up an interview. Gloria called him a few weeks later and ended up going to work as a legal intern in his office while she completed the paralegal program at Cerritos College. Gloria is now a paralegal with a prominent law firm in the community where we live.

❖ It's Who You Know—Trust us!

All of us have heard the expression: *it's not what you know, but who you know that counts*. As with most clichés, there is often a good measure of truth behind the adage. How many friends do you know who work in a family business or for a friend of the family? Usually they work there because it was the path of least resistance, the easiest way to gain employment—through the back door. They may not have taken an employment test, completed an application form, or even had a formal interview. The same practice is also true when you need to have your car repaired, find someone to cut your hair, or need a doctor. You ask your family and friends who they suggest for these services and with whom they have had a good experience—you ask for a recommendation, a referral. The interesting thing is that most people enjoy

being asked to help with finding a doctor, an auto repair shop, or even a job. It gives them a sense of fulfillment when they can help you accomplish your goal. People usually enjoy helping others succeed at obtaining whatever they are seeking.

The greatest resource in a job search is really the people you already know or come to know while conducting your job search. Networking is the path that most often gets people the job. Because of this, it is important to tell everyone you know that you are looking for a job. It may sound unoriginal, but in the real world this is how people make employment connections. A job-seeker may not be aware that the greeter at Wal-Mart with whom he works while attending college has a daughter who owns a beauty supply firm and is looking for outside sales persons. However, if in casual conversation you mention your desire to become a sales representative to this coworker, the subject of his daughter's firm may surface and ultimately lead to a job offer. It is quite possible the perfect job is waiting for you within your circle of friends or family. It is up to you to let people know that you are job hunting and the type of position you are seeking. This is not exploiting your family or friends; this is simply identifying what you want and being open to the possibility that the perfect job for you may be within the knowledge of your family and friends.

Research shows that many more opportunities for interviews leading to jobs or solid career opportunities result from networking than from the Internet or the classified sections of newspapers. Most sources indicate that between 65 and 85 percent (see Tullier, *Networking for Job Security and Career Success*, 2004) of all jobs found result from networking contacts. Thus, you need to direct your focus and energy toward obtaining referrals that open doors and lead to satisfying employment.

To do this, you need to establish daily contacts. You will want to tell each of the individuals with whom you speak about your interest in finding a job. First, identify your network of current and former coworkers, friends, family members, former classmates, professors, members of professional associations, community members, your barber, tax accountant, doctor, dentist, clergy, tradespeople, hairdresser, club members, and all their related networks.

Let your contacts know that you are exploring new opportunities and tell them specifically what type of job you are seeking. Ask each contact if they have *suggestions* on how to break into your career field—*do not ask them for a job*. Also ask them if they believe you have the skills necessary to obtain the position you are seeking and ask if they have suggestions for obtaining additional training or skills. Continue to expand your network each day. A major outplacement firm reported clients who networked the most found jobs much more quickly than clients who networked less frequently.

Here's a personal story about finding employment while one of your authors (Cliff) was attending college. I grew up in a rural community and after graduation planned to attend college in a nearby city, approximately 20 miles from the high school I attended. My high school basketball coach had attended the same university that I planned to attend. I told him that I was enrolling in the university the following fall, but that I would have to work while I attended college as I came from a large family with a modest income. Since most teachers, friends, family, and so on, want to help you further your

education, my coach was excited about my going to college and offered some suggestions regarding part-time jobs. He said that a good friend of his was the manager of a sporting goods store near the university, and that his best friend's wife was the manager of the campus bookstore. I was excited about these prospects, especially the sporting goods store, as I had aspirations of becoming a professional baseball player at that time. With that in mind, I couldn't think of a better place to work than a sporting goods store. Well, my high school basketball coach set up an interview with the hiring manager of both of these organizations. I interviewed with each of them and began work in the summer for the sports store and in the fall at the bookstore where I worked three and one-half years—nearly all of my undergraduate college years. The manager of the bookstore even referred me to the editor of the college newspaper, who was looking for a salesperson to sell advertising. I tried that for a few months until I found out how much time was required for my studies at the university.

These contacts, my employers while in college, led to more relationships that eventually led to my position as a professor of business at a college in the community where I had lived all my life. It should also be noted that playing professional baseball was not in my future; however, a nephew, Joey Eischen, has pitched in the majors for more than 10 years.

It has been proven repeatedly that it's who you know that opens doors to job opportunities that would not otherwise be accessible. Put your energies to work in identifying and contacting those in your network to uncover what is often referred to as the *hidden job market*. The term “hidden job market” stems from job openings known only to those in an organization's network. Many firms do not advertise positions initially, but seek referrals from current employees, or research candidates whose résumé they already have on file.

Before you begin contacting others, make sure you have a system to keep track of the people that you contact. You will need to develop a networking list, perhaps using Microsoft Outlook, Excel, Access, or a similar program. A networking contact form is displayed later in this chapter for possible use. Another suggestion is to prepare a 3 × 5 note card on each person you have met in your networking effort. Obtain their full name, job title, place of employment, business address and card, e-mail address, and telephone number, and record these. Also indicate how this person might be important to you in your job search, what information and suggestions they provided, and any personal or family information about them. Figure 2.1 shows a form you might use to track your networking contacts each week.

Former President Bill Clinton started compiling a card file on literally everyone he met during his college and law school years. He did this to compile a list of those that he might want to contact at some later date—supposedly this was also a technique used by John F. Kennedy. And you can believe he used these all through his political career as he was elected Governor of Arkansas and President of the United States (perhaps there were a few cards he should have discarded). These networking contacts will come in handy now and perhaps a year or two from now when you are thinking of changing jobs and trying to remember the name of the person you spoke to about a graphic artist position in Seattle. And now your fiancé is moving to Seattle and that contact could really come in handy.

❖ Principles of Networking

Networking takes place in many forms, and can be both formal (for example, career fairs, employer meetings, prearranged conversations with alumni) and informal (anyone you meet at the bank, restaurant, post office, laundromat, and so on).

- Broaden your concept of what a network is and how it works. Connections are made at odd moments, under unexpected circumstances, and often after several false starts. If a person does not work in your desired field, it does not mean that he does not know someone who does. It is a good idea to share with your present employer, even if this employer is in an unrelated field, your career goals as you are near the completion of your educational training. Your employer/supervisor may have contacts in other industries or your present firm may have sister companies that have occupations for which you have trained. Of course, this will depend on whether you want your present employer to know of your pending job search.
- Treat everyone you meet with respect and courtesy. In many organizations, staff who answer the phone or greet clients also serve as “gatekeepers”. They often have a lot more influence than you may think as to whether or not you will be allowed inside to meet the hiring manager. In fact, they may even be asked for their opinion of you after you have met with their boss.
- Help others and they in turn will help you however; when you help others, *do not expect anything in return*: just do it out of a sincere desire to be helpful or to simply do the right thing. This was brought home to us recently when a friend of more than 30 years died of cancer and named his garbage collector a beneficiary of his considerable estate. The garbage collector had befriended this individual out of concern for his being alone on holidays, once inviting him to Sunday dinner with his family. It grew into a lasting friendship and subsequently concluded with a gift of some magnitude that was totally unexpected.
- Networking is a two-way street: people who help you may later ask you for assistance. However, asking if you can provide assistance to someone who has helped you is an effective approach to marketing yourself and strengthening the networking relationship.

Here are some specific tips:

1. Provide a copy of your résumé to everyone with whom you come in contact—either at the initial meeting or include one with the follow-up letter or e-mail. Make sure it is well drafted in both appearance and content. Another technique is to ask networking contacts to review and make suggestions regarding your résumé’s content and format. This gets them involved and causes them to look more carefully at your résumé, thus becoming better aware of your skills and abilities.
2. Do not ask the contacts for a job; ask for their ideas about where you might go or whom you might see regarding the career you are seeking.
3. Prepare and memorize a 30-second summary (script) describing the type of position you are seeking and the major skills and experience that you can

bring to that position. This can be crafted using the summary of qualifications from your resume. An example using the Madeline Mosconi résumé's in Chapter IV would read as follows:

I recently completed the Medical Assisting Front-Office Program at Heald College, where I acquired skills in Microsoft Office and Medical Manager. In addition, I participated in an externship program where I spent 20 hours per week for eight weeks in a clinical setting. I was able to practice the skills I had learned by setting appointments, taking vital signs, answering telephone inquiries, making notations on medical charts, setting up examining rooms, completing laboratory forms, and calling in prescriptions. I am truly excited about entering this career field. Do you have any suggestions regarding my approach to entering this field, and would you look at my résumé to see if you think it is professional?

This script needs to be practiced at length, but delivered as though it were original. A good idea is to tape this presentation using video, audio, or both.

4. After you have networked with someone and asked if they know anyone who might have information about the type of employment you are seeking, send them an e-mail, or better yet, a personal handwritten note thanking them for their time and the assistance they gave you—this really stands out.
5. About every three weeks touch base with those in your network. Send them an e-mail, leave a phone message, drop them a note, or send them a card to let them know you appreciate their help and ask them to give you a call if they learn of anything. The persistent wheel gets the grease.
6. When you accept a job, notify and thank helpful contacts utilized in the process.
7. Use some type of tracking program or chart to keep track of your contacts. Figure 1.1 is a chart that might be of help to you.

❖ Become a Joiner

We have a résumé-writing and career-coaching service in a city of over 500,000. Clients often come to us who are seeking employment immediately after graduating from college (many seeking a position as a pharmaceutical representative—can you guess why?) or after a long work history with one firm. The number of clients who come to us and have no professional or community affiliations is great and always surprises us—often they have not been members of anything! They have literally been isolated from professional and educational activities and organizations related to their occupation as well as informal contacts often obtained through community service organizations. We counsel them to join at least one professional and one community organization immediately.

Why should they join these organizations? If you are in the job market looking for employment, you need to be up to speed (current) regarding changes

and technology that are occurring in your career field. One way of doing this is to affiliate with a professional group dedicated to that field or occupation. The second reason is networking. For example, if you were a software programmer it would be advisable to attend meetings of Information Technology (IT) professionals in your area. Through interacting with professionals at industry-related meetings, you will hear about firms that are closing, hiring, expanding, or relocating IT personnel. You will also become more knowledgeable in your field and meet people who may be able to refer you to others who are hiring. Joining needs to begin in college. Do it before graduating. The following story relates why.

Eric, a civil engineering student and officer in the university's engineering club, asked Cliff to make a presentation to the student engineering group regarding résumé preparation. Eric also wisely contacted the California Department of Transportation and asked someone from their human resources department to speak to the club regarding interviewing. Eric's long-range plan, after receiving his degree, was to obtain employment with the California Department of Transportation as an engineering aide and subsequently qualify to become a licensed civil engineer. These jobs are highly sought after and one needs every break to get a shot at them. Well, the person who came out to speak to the engineering club regarding interviewing, by sheer fate, turned out to be a screener for engineering applicants at the Department of Transportation a year later when Eric applied. When this HR employee was reviewing Eric's application materials and résumé, he recognized Eric's name from their previous contacts. They had established a rapport through the numerous contacts that had occurred when Eric had asked the HR person to speak to the engineering club. It is true that Eric's past affiliation and participation in the student organization helped Eric make the cut for the final employment interview phase.

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Networking Online

The largest and most well-known website for seeking jobs and posting résumés online is Monster.com (<http://www.monster.com>). This site also has a networking component, <http://network.monster.com>, which will enable you to connect with others in your occupation, industry, and career level on a national/international basis. A word of warning: When you go online and provide information about yourself, some people in cyberspace may use this information for marketing products or services to you, developing personal relationships, and many other nonprofessional purposes. Thus, be aware that when you do anything in cyberspace, you may receive feedback from your postings and affiliations that you did not initially contemplate. As you can probably tell, the authors are more enthusiastic about networking via personal contacts rather than anonymous connections via the Internet.

EXERCISE 2.1

NETWORKING LIST

Prepare a list of 10 people whom you will contact within the next week for networking purposes. After identifying these 10 individuals, prepare a 3 × 5 note card for each with space for their name, title, firm name, place of employment, business address and card, e-mail

address, telephone and fax number, suggestions they made, names they gave you, family information, and miscellaneous. In practice, you need to complete 10 networking cards each week until you find the position for which you are looking.

EXERCISE 2.2

ONLINE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Go online and find the website for your city or county. Now find the employment opportunities section and copy a minimum of two posi-

tions that you believe you are currently qualified for or will be qualified for when you complete your training.

EXERCISE 2.3

TOOLS TO IMPROVE NETWORKING SKILLS

Exam Credit Assignment: Go to the library and check out *Networking for Job Success and Career Success*, by L. Michelle Tullier, 2014, *Fit Works*. Prepare a summary of the

material found in Chapter 4, “Identifying and Expanding Your Network,” as it relates to tools to improve your networking skills.

THE INTERVIEW

❖ Tell Me About Yourself

“Why don’t you begin by telling me about yourself?” This is one of the most frightening questions frequently asked in the interview. Should it cause you to stutter and break out in a cold sweat? No, not if you have prepared yourself for the interview. And if you haven’t, it can almost end your chances of employment with that firm.

After completing the steps necessary to prepare a top-notch résumé and cover letter, you will have gathered most of the material needed for successful interviews. The only thing remaining, as in most successful stories, is to *prepare well for the interview*. This chapter will help you make plans for that first, second, and third interview. Yes, it does become easier with each interview.

❖ Telephone Recordings

With the busy lives most of us lead, we have answering machines to take calls when we are not available. If you are seeking employment, you should have an answering device on your telephone or someone who communicates well taking messages for you. The message you leave on your machine or cell phone should be *concise*, contain *correct grammar*, be *easily understood*, and have *no background sounds* (heavy metal playing, baby crying, people shouting, dishwasher running). An example of this type of message is:

Thank you for calling. You have reached the Nortons; Judy and Marvin are either at school or work now. Please leave a brief message and your telephone number, and we will return your call promptly.

Another similar message without identifying your name is:

Hello, you have reached 446-8972. We are not available to come to the phone at this time. Please leave your name, number, and a brief message. We will return your call promptly.

As stated earlier, first impressions are important. Make sure your telephone message is professional in its entirety. A way to check is to have someone you respect and who is familiar with good business practices—perhaps a family member or neighbor who is in business—call your number and see if they think your message is appropriate.

❖ Wardrobe and Hygiene

The rule of thumb regarding appropriate dress in an interview is to *dress as you would if you were employed in the position for which you are applying*. If you are applying for work in a business office, you would wear clothing for the interview that is similar to that worn by those within that office. When there is a question as to what is appropriate, it is usually best to dress a bit more conservatively than the most “far out” person in the office or plant.

However, there are exceptions to this rule. Sometimes uniforms are worn by employees performing the job for which you are applying; sometimes a job requires employees to appear in costume; and sometimes a work environment requires wearing coveralls or a smock. In these instances, an applicant should dress as described in the following lists.

Piercings are fairly common; however, those that appear in the tongue and nose are still not readily accepted by the majority of employers. Our suggestion would be to remove these during the interview process, especially if you are seeking employment in a conservative environment.

For a *female* interview applicant, the following is suggested:

1. Business dress—a dress should be modest in length, neckline, color, and style; a business suit or pants/skirt and a blouse are fine.
2. Stockings should complement your outfit—if the interviewer’s attention is drawn to them, they are over the top.
3. Shoes should be clean, polished, and in good repair—usually a low heel is appropriate; a stilett heel or one-heeled shoes are usually inappropriate.
4. Nails are to be modest in length and natural in color.
5. Tattoos on the arms and on other locations should be covered by wearing long sleeves or appropriate collars, and so on.
6. Minimal jewelry such as a watch, ring, plain necklace, or pin is in good taste. Do not wear more than two earrings per ear, nor should earrings be too large or long. Avoid noisy jewelry, such as clanging bracelets.
7. Undergarments should never be seen through or below one’s outer clothing.
8. Clothing that is normally worn to parties, weddings, or a dressy social affair is not appropriate for an interview.
9. Perfume/cologne that has a slight scent and cannot be noticed more than three feet away is appropriate. If an interviewer can detect your scent, the scent is too strong or applied too heavily.
10. Make-up should be modestly applied.
11. Hair should be styled in a conservative manner, and long straight hair should be styled in such a way that it is not constantly being brushed back from the applicant’s face during the interview.

For a *male* interview applicant, the following guidelines are suggested:

1. Clean, pressed cotton or gabardine wool pants in a conservative color are appropriate.
2. A short-sleeve sport shirt (with a collar), pressed, tucked in, and in a color that matches or coordinates with the pants is in good taste (remember, more formal business dress is required if those on the job wear sport coats or suits and ties). Any tattoos on the arms should be covered by wearing long-sleeved shirts.
3. Socks that are nearly the same color as the pants should be worn (not white athletic socks).
4. Casual shoes, leather or suede, low top, clean and shined are appropriate (wear more dressy shoes if wearing a suit or slacks).
5. Nails should be cleaned and trimmed.
6. You should be freshly shaven with hair, beard, and/or facial hair styles similar to those worn by the majority of workers in the department of the company where you are applying.
7. Use deodorant, and if you wish, *mildly* scented aftershave lotion (no strong colognes).
8. Wear minimal jewelry—watch and one ring are O.K.—and modest earrings only if *commonly* worn on the job by other employees.

Often the persons interviewing you will be older and more conservative than you. Thus, some of the dress or jewelry items that your friends think are cool may not be viewed the same way by the interviewer.

Obtaining appropriate clothing need not be expensive. Thrift and consignment stores frequently have good quality clothing for 20 percent of the original value. A student of one of the authors recently purchased a skirt, blouse, and heels from a thrift store. The outfit looked very professional and the price for all of the items was only \$12.

❖ Planning for the Interview

Here's a tip: When contacted by an employer to schedule an interview time, we suggest that you select a time at the end of the period when the interviews are being conducted. Some research suggests more candidates are hired from those being interviewed last or near the end of the interview process. The interviewer will remember more about you if you are at the end of the scheduled interviews, thus improving your chances for selection.

After you have made contact with an employer and scheduled an interview, you will need to do some preparation. The preparation will depend on the type of interview. The more traditional interview is a *one-on-one* situation with questions being asked by one individual, usually a representative from human resources or the supervisor of the department where you would be employed.

Another type of interview is the *panel* interview where you are interviewed by three to five individuals who sit behind a long table and ask you questions

similar to those posed in a one-on-one interview. Government agencies often use a panel interview to attempt to remove the bias that an individual interviewer might have. The panel interview always seems a bit more intimidating because the applicant is outnumbered, but the questions are usually the same as one would normally anticipate, but asked by three different individuals. The protocol for this type of interview is to shake hands and greet each of the interviewers upon arrival and departure. Usually the interviewer in the center will act as the facilitator and explain the process to the applicant. In the panel interview it is appropriate to ask the facilitator if you can hand out additional material to each of the interviewers. If given the green light, provide supplemental materials to all of those on the panel.

A third type of interview is the *telephone* interview. Sometimes, because of distance or to screen potential candidates, a telephone interview will be conducted. The most important thing to remember in this type of interview is to speak clearly and in complete sentences—no “yep,” “nope,” or slang. Otherwise the preparation for the questions to be asked will be similar to the one-on-one interview.

❖ Prior to the Interview

First, purchase a presentation folder to take with you to the interview. Place in your folder a copy of your résumé, references, letters of recommendation, and, if appropriate, samples of your work. Be prepared to leave the folder with the employer. The additional items contained in the folder will enhance your chances of being selected for the position. In addition, by preparing this folder, you demonstrate outstanding organization, planning, and presentation skills. You should also purchase a small notebook and pen to take notes during the interview. An employer may ask you to send them some additional information, for example, a college transcript. When you make a note of this in your notebook and ask for the mailing address, it again will emphasize your organization skills.

Next, be sure you know the exact (building and office) location where the interview is to be held. The day before the interview, take a practice run and see how long it takes to get there—consider traffic conditions at the time the interview is planned. Plan on arriving for the interview 10 minutes before it is scheduled.

When you arrive for the interview, give the receptionist your name and tell him the name of the person (which you have memorized) who is expecting you and the scheduled time for your interview. Anticipate a wait longer than 10 minutes. Interviews that go well often last longer than the interviewer expected, so the interviewer runs past the appointed time. While waiting in the reception area before being interviewed, take out the note cards you have prepared containing possible interview questions (see the next section in this chapter, “Preparing for the Interview Questions”) and review them.

When you are called into the office to be interviewed, address the interviewer by name using Ms., Mrs., Mr., or Dr., and *smile*. Remember to smile frequently during the interview. Will you be nervous? Yes, of course. Does the employer expect you to be nervous? Yes. Females should offer to shake hands

only if the interviewer extends a hand. Males should extend a *firm* handshake to another male, and wait until a female interviewer extends her hand.

❖ Preparing for the Interview Questions

In preparing your answers to the questions most likely to be asked, you will need information about the company that you gathered from the Internet, a job announcement, or a company brochure (if you obtained one). The more you know about the company the easier it will be.

The primary function of the interview is to *find out if you have the skills, training, experience, and interest necessary to fulfill the requirements of the position*. Most employers are trying to determine if you will fit the job and their corporate culture (company personality). The big question in the interviewer's mind is "If you are hired, will it be a lasting employment relationship—will you remain with the employer for at least several years?" They will ask you a series of questions to try to determine if you, the job, and the company are compatible.

Some universal suggestions to those being interviewed are:

1. Smile frequently during the interview.
2. Use the name and title of the interviewer (Mr., Mrs., M., Dr. . . .).
3. When you shake hands, do so firmly; grasp the entire hand, not just the fingers.
4. Wait to be asked to be seated.
5. Maintain eye contact with the interviewer (very important).
6. Sit up straight in the chair, don't lean on the interviewer's desk, and keep your hands still.
7. Be positive in your comments, outlook, and attitude.
8. Avoid chewing gum or tobacco.

It is best not to smoke or even smell of smoke during the interview—the vast majority of employers and employees don't smoke.

What kinds of questions will they ask? On the following pages are some typical questions and responses we think are good answers—not the only answers. The questions are grouped into four categories. Remember, these are only typical responses. Your responses need to be personalized to you and your qualifications.

❖ Typical Questions Regarding Your Qualifications

Note that the common thread through all the suggested responses that appear in the following tables is to remain positive. As the cliché states, "If you are given lemons, make lemonade." Thus, if you were laid off or let go by a former

employer, state that you were let go and the reason. However, follow up with a statement about what you learned from this experience and that you have vowed never to repeat this mistake again.

QUESTIONS

SUGGESTED RESPONSES

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Please tell me about yourself. | “I’ve recently completed a clerical office program at Valley Community College. I took classes and completed an internship that provided me with an understanding of medical terminology, billing, scheduling appointments, and Microsoft Word. And I have an excellent letter of recommendation from Dr. Schwartz’s office where I completed my 600-hour internship.” |
| 2. What are your strongest skills? | “I believe my strongest skills are word processing, using either MS Word or Word-Perfect. During my internship, I prepared correspondence, memorandums, newsletters with extensive graphics, and tables containing lots of numbers. I was also taking an advanced course in MS Word and Excel.” |
| 3. Why should we hire you? | “By hiring me, you will be getting a well-trained apprentice plumber with excellent skills such as the ability to work with copper, steel, cast iron, and plastic pipe; and the ability to install appliances such as heaters, boilers, and air conditioners. Also you will be getting someone who wants a career position. I was with my last employer for more than four years.” |
| 4. What do you know about this job? | “I downloaded a job description from the Internet. It indicated you were looking for someone (programmer and network administrator) with knowledge of C++, COBOL, and dBASE. I am proficient in these computer languages, plus I earned Network+ and A+ Certified Technician status while completing my network technician training.” |
| 5. Will you please tell me about any work experience or training that relates to this job? | “I worked part-time as a clerk/cashier for Wal-Mart while I completed the Sales Associate Program at Miller |

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Community College. The program and part-time experience taught me to make change correctly, balance a cash drawer, greet customers politely, and make suggestions for using other services that the store provided.”

6. Why do you want to work for this company?

“I went on the Internet at school and found that Acme Electric is one of the fastest-growing HVAC firms in Wisconsin according to an article in *Wisconsin Business Week*. With the growth expected for this company, I see long-term opportunities and possible promotions with Acme as a heating and air control systems analyst.”

7. Please describe your work experience.

(Same type of response as given for #5.)

8. Are you willing to travel in this position?

“Yes, as a single woman who would like to see more of the Southwestern U.S., travel sounds great. In fact, I would welcome an opportunity to travel and even consider relocation to another state.”

Questions Regarding Character

1. How long were you with your former employers?

“All of my positions have been part-time while taking college classes, except in the summer when I worked full time. I have been with my present employer for 18 months and the previous one about a year. I’ve learned a great deal in my present job. I was given a research project where I utilized case digests, Shepard’s Citations, and on-line research systems such as Lexis.”

2. What are your strengths and weaknesses?

“My strengths are in my ability to work as a team member, take instruction, learn quickly, and constantly look for better ways to complete assignments. Perhaps a weakness might be that I sometimes work on a project until it’s perfect. I’m beginning to realize that this is not always practical from a time management point of view.”

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3. Do you work well under pressure? “Yes, most of the time. When I was working as a part-time teller at a credit union while I was going to school, we were robbed by a gunman with a ski mask over his head. I kept my cool and followed all the procedures that we had been taught. We were complimented later by management for following proper procedures.”
4. What are you most proud of? “When I completed the Welding Program at Paramount Vocational College, I was named the ‘Trainee Most Likely to Succeed’ by my classmates. It made me feel good that my buddies thought I would be a success as a welder.”
5. What types of things irritate you about coworkers? “Sometimes other employees goof off when they are supposed to be working and that causes me to have to do more work. I’m beginning to learn what if I do my job well and let the supervisor handle employees who slack off, things work out better.”
6. Are you OK working for a younger supervisor? “Yes, in fact my current boss is a woman six years younger than me.”
7. Describe your best and worst bosses. “I’ve not had any really bad bosses. But I have had bosses that I admire more than some of the others. The best bosses give clear instructions, let me use my initiative, are always available for questions, and tell me when I do a good job. I think I would like to be a supervisor some day.”
8. What have you learned from your mistakes? “That when I make a mistake, I should admit it and try to learn from it so that I won’t make the same mistake again.”
9. What do you know about this company? “I called the Human Resources Department and they sent me a brochure and annual report that told me a lot about the company. I learned that the company is selling more than 70% of its products on the Internet, and I feel my knowledge of creating home pages and HTML would be useful in this position.”

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Questions Regarding Career Goals

1. What do you want to be doing in 15 years?

“I would like to be a plant maintenance supervisor. I plan to continue to take courses at the community college and within three or four years become certified by the American Plant Maintenance Association. I have enjoyed repairing, troubleshooting, and diagnosing equipment problems all my life.”

2. What are your hobbies and interests outside of work?

Note: Mention hobbies that relate to the type of occupation you have chosen. A follow-up response after question #1 for a plant maintenance position would be: “I have quite a collection of model cars, some of which actually can be operated by remote control. Eventually I hope to restore a 1955 Chevrolet—that’s kind of my dream.”

3. Do you plan to continue your education?

“Yes, in fact I have signed up to take Beginning Spanish this fall.”

4. What kind of work interests you most?

“Cooking. I have always been fascinated by recipes and creating special dishes for family holidays. I know this position is for a fry cook, but eventually I want to be a chef in a major restaurant.”

5. What are your salary expectations for the future, say five years?

“I believe this position pays \$1800 per month to begin. When I complete my additional course work and demonstrate my skills and loyalty to this company, I would expect that I would be earning 25 to 40% more in five years than when I began.”

6. What motivates you?

“I imagine the same thing that motivates most people: doing work I like; being able to have some control over the work that I do; receiving praise for a job well done; and being paid and treated fairly.”

7. Do you consider yourself a leader or a follower?

Be honest! If you are a follower, and most people are, say something like the following: “I’m more comfortable when others make decisions and I follow them. When I work in a team situation, I like to give my input.”

8. Of the classes that you have taken, which did you like best? Why?

Naturally, this depends on your major and occupation, but the classes you indicate should be related to the type of work you want to do. An example would be:

“Advertising was my favorite class. I really enjoyed writing ads. In fact, I worked for the school newspaper and obtained advertising material from local merchants. I helped most of them with layout and copy for the ads. That was really fun.”

Difficult or Stress Questions

1. If another employee asked you to sign her out because she was leaving 45 minutes early, how would you handle this?

“I would simply tell her I wasn’t comfortable doing that.”

2. If your boss asks you to do some birthday shopping for her son on your lunch hour, what would your response be?

“That would be tough. I would have to think about this—how well I knew the boss, whether it was a one-time thing, what kind of sacrifice I would like to make, and why my boss couldn’t do it herself.”

3. What are your greatest weaknesses?

Never say you don’t have any! No one on this planet is perfect. A better way to handle this is: “Sometimes I become impatient with coworkers because I want to get the job done on schedule and they goof off when the boss isn’t around, but usually I try to keep my cool and just do my job regardless of what others are doing.”

(or)

“My writing skills are not quite as good as they should be, so I am taking an English course at the Adult Education Center in Provo this summer.”

4. What do you expect in the way of a beginning salary?

Tread lightly. Try to get the interviewer to give you the range for this job. Also be sure you have done your homework and have a good idea what the job “normally” pays.

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5. Have you ever been fired from a job?

You can say:

“I would assume that the pay would be based on the responsibilities, experience, and education of the individual to be hired.”

(or)

“The job announcement that I received from HRD said the salary range was \$14 to \$18 an hour, and that seems OK to me.”

Be honest and tactful.

“No.”

(or)

“Yes, once when my supervisor learned that I was looking for another job. But I found another job within 10 days.”

(or)

“Yes, at a pet store where I worked I was late for work one day and didn’t put down the correct name that I had arrived. I was not given a good reference as I had been there for three years and was an assistant manager. I realize I made a poor decision and learned from that experience.”

6. What type of things do friends or family tease or criticize you about?

“My sister is always kidding me about taking classes. I never seem to have the opportunity to learn all the things that I want to know about.”

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❖ Questions For You to Ask

You should ask some questions during and at the end of the interview. You should prepare a minimum of three questions to be asked during the interview. Doing this will cause the interviewer to believe that you are sincerely interested in the position. Also, you can gain some valuable information about the job, company, and supervisors from these questions. This will assist you in deciding whether you want to work for this company when a job offer is made. Some of the questions that are appropriate for you to ask are:

1. Could you describe in more detail the responsibilities of the job?
2. What skills are most critical in this job?
3. Is this a new position or did someone leave?
4. What type of person would be most successful in this position?
5. How is an employee evaluated in this position?

6. Would it be all right for me to volunteer to come in for a day to view what the work is really like in this department? (Your offer to volunteer will really impress most employers.)
7. What is the company's practice and attitude regarding additional training and education?
8. When might I expect to learn of your decision regarding filling this position?

❖ After the Interview

When the interview is concluded, thank the interviewer, express an interest in the position, and ask when you might learn of the interviewer's decision regarding when the position is to be filled. Shake hands if appropriate and leave. Smile and say goodbye to the receptionist on the way out. It would help if you addressed her by name—often there is a nameplate on the desk that provides this information. Many times the interviewer will ask the receptionist what her impression was of the candidate. Thus, you may be interviewing when you are in the waiting room and not even know it.

❖ Follow-Up Letters to the Interviewer

Within 24 hours write a thank-you letter to the interviewer. As in the case of completing this step you will stand out because most applicants don't follow up the interview with a thank-you letter. The purpose of the letter is to demonstrate courtesy, express continued interest in the position, and provide additional information regarding your qualifications that you might have forgotten to state during the interview. You can handwrite the follow-up letter or prepare it on the computer. Handwrite the letter only if you have excellent handwriting. Proofread this letter as carefully as you did your résumé.

Another thing that will make you stand out is to contact the employer approximately 10 to 14 days after the interview. The contact may be made by telephone or another letter. Either is appropriate. It demonstrates your continued interest in the position. The letter should be short and simply state your interest and willingness to return for a subsequent interview or to answer any questions by telephone. Again, if you think of any skills or qualifications that you failed to mention during the interview, state them in the call or follow-up letter.

Figure 3.1 is an example of a follow-up letter to the interview from an applicant who was applying for a position as a bookkeeper/accountant.

Figure 3.1 Interview Follow-up Letter

FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO THE INTERVIEW
(your personal letterhead)

(date)

(inside address)

Dear Ms. _____:

I enjoyed the opportunity to meet with you regarding the bookkeeping/accountant position that is open at Murray Equipment Supply.

One of the things that I forgot to mention to you during the interview is that last summer, while working at Yosemite National Park as a bus driver, my supervisor asked me to keep the records and create schedules for the drivers. Since my boss knew that I was studying accounting, he asked if I would prepare all of the work schedules and bus routes using a spreadsheet program with which he was unfamiliar, i.e. Excel. Thus, I spent about three weeks using Excel to provide worksheets for more than 40 bus routes and 16 drivers. In addition, I trained my supervisor to use Excel in preparing future schedules and routes.

It is exciting to be considered for the position at Murray Equipment Supply. Please let me know if you have any additional questions regarding my qualifications and interest in the position.

Sincerely,
(signature)
(your typed name)

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PERSONALIZING ANSWERS TO TYPICAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Obtain a packet of 3 × 5-inch ruled note cards. Place the questions contained in the sections in this chapter entitled “Typical Questions Regarding Your Qualifications,” “Questions Regarding Character,” “Questions Regarding Career Goals,” plus “Stress or Difficult Questions,” on one side of the card, one question per card. On the reverse side

prepare a response that is appropriate for you, your education, experience, goals, and the position for which you will be applying. Now practice and memorize the answers that you prepared. If you do this, you will be very confident when you go in for an interview. And confidence equals success and job offers.

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